Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive Dimensions of Storytelling: Exploring Thai EFL University Students' Attitudes through Mixed-Methods Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Aim. Storytelling as a pedagogical tool has been studied extensively in early education, but its role in shaping university English as a foreign language (EFL) students' attitudes in Southeast Asia remains underexplored. This study investigated Thai EFL university students' attitudes towards storytelling as a pedagogical tool (SATSPT) in the affective, behavioural and cognitive domains and whether there were differences regarding the students' school affiliation and proficiency levels.

Methods. An explanatory sequential research design was adopted through the administration of quantitative surveys that measured the affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions of attitudes towards SATSPT using the ABC model. The sample consisted of 3,207 first year university students. Then, qualitative interviews were conducted among ten selected students with various levels of English proficiency and from different faculties to further explain their attitudes.

Results. Findings show generally positive attitudes with respect to affective (M=3.70), behavioural (M=3.62) and cognitive (M=3.76) domains. Cognitive perceptions were strong. It indicated how effective storytelling is for vocabulary acquisition and linguistic understanding. Affective outcomes included excitement and engagement, but limited reduction in anxiety in speaking tasks. Behaviourally, storytelling elicited strong in-class participation but little voluntary engagement beyond formal venues. The test of ANOVA proved no existence of significant difference on attitudes among faculties (p=0.357) but significant differences among different English proficiency levels (p=0.017). It implies the necessity for differentiated instructional strategies.

Conclusion. By employing an ABC model to explain multidimensional student attitudes towards storytelling, this study brings considerable empirical development both to Asian EFL higher education pedagogy and to conceptions of storytelling within proficiency-based learning.

Keywords: storytelling, pedagogical tool, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), attitudes, ABC model, Thai university students

Introduction

Educational institutions across non-English-speaking Asian countries have emphasised English language education to improve students' proficiency because it supports socio-economic development and global participation. Tran Lee Huu Nghia and Nngoc Tung Vu (2023) note that growth driven by foreign investment and exports has pushed English to the centre of national agendas. With the rise of several large Asian economies, the 21st century has been called the Asian century (Nghia & Vu, 2023). In response, many governments have introduced wide-ranging reforms to provide high-quality

English education. It is to build a skilled workforce and increase employability in local and global markets (Mok & Sawn Khai, 2024).

Common reforms include introducing English earlier in schooling. It becomes a core subject and increases instructional hours. The goal is a stronger command of English by the time students reach higher education (Bezborodova & Radjabzade, 2022). Systems have also embedded technology to enrich learning and widen access to resources (Ulla et al., 2020). In parallel, professional development has aimed to equip teachers with contemporary methods to make classrooms more engaging. However, despite these efforts, low English proficiency remains a major challenge across Asia (Islam & Stapa, 2021). This signals a gap between policy design and classroom outcomes.

The gap is clear in several contexts. In Bangladesh, the 1996 shift to communicative language teaching brought limited gains because of policy missteps and weak implementation (Islam & Stapa, 2021). Indonesia shows a similar pattern. Low proficiency is linked to internal factors such as low motivation and anxiety, and external factors such as weak pedagogy and large classes. In the English Proficiency Index 2023, Indonesia ranks 79th of 113 nations. This suggests a continued need for better teaching approaches and policy support.

Thailand also prioritises international integration and development. Yet English proficiency remains low. As Nghia and Vu (2023) report, Thailand ranks 8th among ASEAn nations in the 2023 index and is classified as "very low." After more than a decade of English instruction, many students remain at or near CEFR A2 (North & Piccardo, 2023). Researchers link this to an overreliance on conventional and native-centric methods that stress grammar and testing rather than communication (Nghia & Vu, 2023). They also caution that global benchmarks like the CEFR can be misapplied when they do not align with local contexts. Limited authentic exposure and dominant grammar-translation practices further restrict learners' communicative growth (Jeharsae & Boonsuk, 2024).

In response, researchers call for approaches that centre communication, interaction and learner engagement (Ismail & Kassem, 2022). Storytelling is one promising option. It offers context-rich narratives that prompt meaningful language use. Daniel Ginting et al. (2024) argue that storytelling engages imagination and supports acquisition, while James J. Cummings et al. (2024) show that immersive narratives can improve listening, comprehension and production.

Yet university students' attitudes toward storytelling as a pedagogical tool (SATSPT) are still under-studied. Most work focuses on younger learners, with fewer studies on how undergraduates view storytelling for their own English development (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021). To address this gap, this study uses a sequential explanatory research design to examine students' affective, behavioural and cognitive (ABC) attitudes toward SATSPT in a public university in southern Thailand. By highlighting these attitudes and experiences, this study aims to inform curriculum reform and contribute to theory on storytelling in higher education. It seeks to offer practical

guidance for moving beyond grammar-centred teaching toward more communicative, context-sensitive practice.

This study is premised on assumptions that guided its relational research approach. First, students' attitudes towards storytelling as a pedagogical tool encompass the affective, behavioural and cognitive domains that jointly shape their language learning experience and these experiences with storytelling are assumed to provide explanatory depth to measures of attitude. Third, it is assumed that attitudes towards storytelling may vary systematically based on students' school affiliations and English proficiency levels. Thus, it necessitates group comparisons to uncover meaningful differences. These assumptions motivate the study of both the extent of attitudes and their explanatory contextual experiences to inform more effective pedagogical practices.

Guided by these foundational premises, the current study centres its focus on shedding light on the following questions:

– What is the extent of students' attitudes towards SATSPT (in terms of affective, behavioural, and cognitive domains)? How do students' experiences explain the result?

– Is there a significant difference in the extent of SATSPT when grouped according to school affiliation and current English proficiency level? How do students' experiences explain the result?

Literature Review

The Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive Dimensions (ABC) of Attitude

First introduced by Alice H. Eagly and Shelly Chaiken (1993), the ABC model provides a well-rounded perspective to studying the multi-dimensional aspects of attitudes by breaking them down into three interconnected parts, namely, affective, behavioural and cognitive. In its most general form, this conceptualisation asserts that attitudes summarise a person's tendency to react to aspects of the world, including objects, activities or ideas, with varying degrees of approval or disapproval. The affective component is focused on emotional responses, whether recognised at the conscious level or perceived at the implicit level. It comprises the behavioural aspect such as what people actually do about the attitude object including their behaviour and intentions, and the cognitive aspect such as what people believe or perceive about the attitude object, as well as the mental representations regarding it. The ABC model captures the multidimensionality of attitudes and is therefore highly relevant to educational studies addressing students' attitudes toward particular teaching approaches (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) to different teaching practices. In addition, recent studies have served to highlight the relevance of the ABC model to second language

learning due to its capacity to separate students' emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses to instructional strategies (McChesney et al., 2025).

Regarding the affective component, Bloom's taxonomy describes the stages from consciousness awareness of feelings to internalisation of values (Krathwohl et al., 1964). This hierarchy shows an increase in emotional involvement with the learning content. Importantly, this emotional investment affects motivation and persistence, which influences language acquisition. As demonstrated by Liam Printer (2023), positive feeling experiences are positively related to learners' intrinsic motivation, whilst Jack C. Richards (2022) noted that anxiety and negative feelings can restrain students' readiness to engage with cognitively challenging language tasks. This idea was corroborated by Ali Soroush et al. (2022) that emotional state affects communicative competence because emotions do facilitate authentic language or do constrain it. From an attitudinal point of view, positive affect associated with a pedagogical tool, including storytelling might enhance students' degree of interest and commitment to language activities (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) which encourages better learning results.

Following Simon Ellis and Janet Tod (2018) three-part taxonomy, namely, relationships with the curriculum (cognitive), relationships with others (social) and relationships with self (emotional), the behavioural component provides a concrete measure of students' responses to and engagement with teaching resources. Such interactions occur within a framework of reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986) in which individual dispositions, environmental triggers and behaviour are acted upon mutually reinforce one another. For example, EFL students in a storytelling-based classroom who view the technique as enjoyable and constructive (affective and cognitive contributors) are more likely to exhibit engagement behaviour like active listening, volunteering ideas and working collaboratively in storytelling tasks. On the other hand, when learners hold negatively towards a particular teaching method, they may withhold participation and thus thwart any of the pedagogical gains that could have been made.

The cognitive component involves students' beliefs, knowledge and mental representations about the object of their attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). To illustrate, students are most likely to encounter such cognitive schemas in the world of language learning, where they may manifest as sets of prior knowledge regarding effective teaching practices, self-efficacy beliefs or attitudinal judgments concerning the usefulness of specific pedagogical approaches (Yan & Kim, 2023). In addition, when high-order cognitive skills (e.g., analytical thinking, problem-solving, reflection) are applied, students tend to receive and internalise new linguistic input more effectively and deeply (Almutawa & Alfahid, 2024). Furthermore, students who are firmly convinced of the power of storytelling as an effective means to help them retain vocabulary and become better communicators will be more likely to embrace a narrative-based task and view it as meaningful learning experience. Conversely, scepticism or fallacy can cause shallow involvement or resistance to participatory sessions.

Following that, the ABC model is used in this current study to unpack the complexities of learner responses. First, exploring the affective dimension provides insight into students' emotional responses either excitement, fear, or curiosity. It brings the motivational foundations into view. Second, from the behavioural perspective, it enables researchers to examine the effect of storytelling on classroom participation and language use, which provides insights into the practical viability of implementing narrative-based instruction in higher education. Last but not least, the cognitive dimension elucidates students' beliefs regarding the efficacy of storytelling in enhancing language proficiency to indicate the potential need for teachers to scaffold or give explicit rationales to employ narratives. By synthesising each of these three dimensions, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive account of student attitudes and consequently deliver observations that can inform decisions made by curriculum designers and language teachers.

Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool in EFL Contexts

During the last few decades, a shift towards interactive and learner-centered pedagogies has been evident in EFL education as storytelling being a powerful and versatile tool (Shahid & Khan, 2022). Unmoored from children's literature or early language learning, storytelling in EFL has attracted scholarly interest for its ability to weave linguistic, cognitive and cultural learning goals. Based on past studies, storytelling reflects a pedagogical model in accordance with communicative and constructivist paradigms in which the students are invited to co-construct the knowledge through pitches of narrative, peer work and reflection (Fan, 2022).

In the Thai EFL setting, the importance of investigating storytelling is based on the proven effectiveness of storytelling in providing solutions to the problems that have adversely affected students in higher educational institutions in the past (Hien & Phuong, 2024). Despite widespread efforts of Thai universities to improve their English instruction, an isolating majority of students still lack involvement or competence in communicating in speaking and writing (Azis & Husnawadi, 2020). As such, storytelling has proven to be a viable intervention that allows oral skills development through the experience of sharing narratives and active listening, as well as written expression through the creation of reflective journals or the adaptation of existing tales (Brooks et al., 2022). These dimensions are salient in Thai classrooms, where students often do not have access to authentic opportunities to communicate in the target language as a result of large class sizes, limited instructional hours and traditional lecture-based pedagogy (Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021).

In addition to its linguistic impact, storytelling has been lauded for instilling important cognitive and socio-emotional gains. An expanding body of research highlights how such narrative-based learning is critical because it encourages students to in-

terpret the structures of a plot, glean from character motives and connect the themes in text to experience (Fan, 2022). They necessitate higher high cognitive skills such as synthesis and evaluation, which have been found to improve overall academic performance. Furthermore, the narrative structure elicits high emotional involvement because learners usually empathise with characters or associate narratives with their own lived experiences (Eekhof et al., 2023). This affective resonance may increase motivation and decrease foreign language anxiety. These are two key components in maintaining long-run language development (Robin, 2016).

Even though these benefits have been reported, there are still significant gaps in the existing literature that warrant further studies in context-specific environments in higher education institutions located outside the Western contexts. Although storytelling approaches have been well researched in early childhood and primary education settings, there are fewer studies specialising in teaching EFL students in Southeast Asian universities. In such contexts, variations in English language proficiency may influence the effectiveness of narrative-driven teaching (Hien & Phuong, 2024). Moreover, the interplay of affective, behavioural, and cognitive components that shape students' attitudes toward storytelling has rarely been systematically examined. In Thai university classrooms, the cultural (Lemana et al., 2025) and technological diversity (Dipendra et al., 2025) among students adds further complexity. It implies that learners may prioritise different learning approaches or engage with technology in varied ways, making attitudinal and cultural awareness both essential and challenging.

Another aspect to consider is how different is the impact of the digital and face-to-face forms of storytelling on learners' engagement and competence. Researchers have begun to explore and investigate how multimedia elements can enhance the storytelling experience (Brooks et al., 2022) as digital literacy becomes an auxiliary skill. Yet, the potential cognitive load or technological barriers to participation by students in under-resourced contexts remains an open question (Golzar et al., 2024). As such, it is difficult to engage in more granular exploration of students' attitudes towards storytelling, including traditional and digital formats to inform customised pedagogical approaches.

Considering these gaps, this present study investigates Thai university students' attitudes towards storytelling based on the ABC model. The findings provide information that may also lead to more accommodative and effective curricular designs that are informative to the specific context of Thai EFL learners.

Methodology

Mixed-method research approach was selected for this study, particularly the explanatory sequential research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This design was suited for examining Thai university EFL students' attitudes about storytelling be-

cause attitudes are comprised of affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions, which are complex and context dependent. So, combining quantitative breadth and qualitative depth, this study thus produced not just numerical typologies of attitudes but also the contextually-situated interpretations of these patterns.

This study responds to several key research problems identified in the literature. First, there is a lack of empirical study into how storytelling is received as a pedagogical tool in Southeast Asian higher education contexts. Second, few studies have examined the attitudes of tertiary EFL learners towards storytelling using a structured framework such as the ABC model. Finally, there is limited understanding of how students' attitudes vary across faculties and proficiency levels, and how their experiences explain these variations. Addressing these problems required a design that could capture both measurable trends and rich narrative insights.

This study was conducted at a public autonomous university in southern Thailand. As an autonomous institution, it has the authority to implement curriculum reforms, including revisions to the English curriculum and the teaching of English as a foreign language. As part of these reforms, storytelling was introduced as a pedagogical tool for teaching basic English courses, beginning in the academic year 2023–2024. These courses are offered by the university's School of Languages and General Education, which assigns coordinators to oversee each course and pre-select a standardised set of stories. Throughout the 16-week semester, students, regardless of their faculty or English proficiency level, engage with a designated story each week. However, the objective is not to simply learn the stories themselves, but rather to develop English language skills through storytelling as an instructional approach. Put differently, at this university, each story functions as a springboard for various language-learning activities. For instance, students listen to or read the story and then engage in comprehension exercises, discussions, and role-playing activities that reinforce key linguistic structures and vocabulary. Additionally, they practice speaking through retelling exercises, guided dialogues, and presentations, while writing activities involve summarising the story, crafting alternative endings, or responding to reflective prompts.

To collect data for this study, ethics approval (WUEC-24-378-01) was obtained. Then, the survey questionnaire was constructed, consisting of three components of attitudes, defined in the ABC model. Each component was measured in ten items using a Likert scale with five response options, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

The final questionnaire consisted of 30 items in total (10 items per domain) designed to capture students' attitudes towards storytelling across the affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions of the ABC model. Affective items assessed students' enjoyment, confidence, comfort and emotional engagement with storytelling. Behavioural items focused on their participation in and application of storytelling, both inside and outside the classroom. Cognitive items addressed students' beliefs about storytelling's impact on vocabulary development, comprehension, critical thinking, and cultural

understanding. Additionally, the questionnaire included a preliminary section to collect basic demographic data such as age, gender, faculty or school affiliation and current English proficiency level.

This instrument underwent face and content validation by three experts in EFL pedagogy and educational measurement. They assessed the clarity, relevance and representativeness of the items (Polit & Beck, 2006). Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on pilot data to assess construct validity, with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of 0.84 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielding significant results ($p < 0.001$). They confirm sampling adequacy (Hair et al., 2019). Reliability analysis showed acceptable internal consistency across all domains, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.88 for affective, 0.85 for behavioural and 0.89 for cognitive components. All exceed the 0.70 threshold (Field, 2024).

All first-year students ($N = 3,207$) enrolled in the university's first fundamental English course during the first semester of the academic year 2024–2025 were invited to complete a survey questionnaire (written in both English and Thai) via Google Forms. The questionnaire provided details about the study's purpose, ethical guidelines, and participants' rights. Students were assured of their anonymity and informed that their participation was voluntary and would not affect their academic results in any way. Lecturers assisted the researchers by distributing the survey link to their classes and providing clear instructions. Responses were collected over a two-week period in November 2024. After the quantitative data was gathered and analysed, the study moved into the qualitative phase.

To gain deeper insights into the quantitative findings, individual interviews were conducted with ten first-year students from different academic disciplines and varying English proficiency levels. Participants were selected through a voluntary recruitment process, where the first ten students who responded to an email invitation were included in the study. This approach aligns with Richard A. Krueger's and Mary Anne Casey (2014) recommendation that smaller groups are more effective for in-depth and interactive discussions. The table below presents their profiles.

Table 1

Profile of Interview Participants

Participant	Gender Identity	School	English Proficiency Level
S1	Female	School of Education and Liberal Arts	A2 (Elementary)
S2	Female	School of Science	B2 (Upper Intermediate)
S3	Male	School of Medicine	C1 (Expert)
S4	Male	School of Engineering and Technology	A2 (Elementary)
S5	Male	School of Public Health	B2 (Intermediate)
S6	LGBTIQ+	School of Accountancy and Finance	A1 (Starter)

Participant	Gender Identity	School	English Proficiency Level
S7	Male	School of Education and Liberal Arts	A2 (Elementary)
S8	Female	School of Education and Liberal Arts	A2 (Elementary)
S9	Female	School of Pharmacy	A2 (Elementary)
S10	Female	School of Nursing	C1 (Expert)

Source. Own research.

Interview participants had the flexibility to respond in either language based on their comfort level. The main researcher conducted the interviews alongside a Thai lecturer fluent in both languages to facilitate communication. All interviews were audio-recorded, and responses given in Thai were translated into English by the Thai lecturer. Likewise, participants were given the opportunity to review and verify both the transcripts and their translations.

To analyse the descriptive extent of students' attitudes, the following interpretations were used: Higher mean scores (4.21–5.00) indicate a very positive attitude, with students valuing storytelling highly; mean scores between 3.41 and 4.20 reflect a generally positive attitude, while scores between 2.61 and 3.40 suggest neutrality or indifference; scores ranging from 1.81 to 2.60 indicate a negative attitude, and the lowest scores (1.00–1.80) represent a very negative view of storytelling. Moreover, the quantitative data was subjected to Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine whether these differences were statistically significant based on school affiliation and proficiency levels ($p < .05$).

Based on the quantitative results, the interviews were conducted and transcribed. The data were then thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to examine how they aligned with or diverged from the quantitative findings.

Results

RQ1: Extent of Students' Attitudes Towards Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool (SATSPT)

The analysis of the students' attitudes towards storytelling as a pedagogical tool was conducted across three key domains: affective, behavioural and cognitive. The mean scores for each domain, along with their interpretations, are as follows:

Table 2
Mean Scores of Students' Attitudes Towards Storytelling by Domain (N=3207)

Domain	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Affective	3.70	0.96	generally positive attitude
Behavioral	3.62	0.96	generally positive attitude

Domain	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Cognitive	3.76	0.93	generally positive attitude
Overall	3.69	0.95	generally positive attitude

Source. Own research.

The cognitive domain recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.76, SD = 0.93), indicating that students perceive storytelling as an effective learning tool. This was followed by the affective domain (M = 3.70, SD = 0.96), suggesting a positive emotional connection to storytelling. The behavioural domain had the lowest score (M = 3.62, SD = 0.96), implying that while students recognise the value of storytelling, their actual participation in storytelling-related activities is slightly lower. The overall mean score (M = 3.69, SD = 0.95) confirms a generally positive attitude toward storytelling as a pedagogical tool.

Students were asked to elaborate on their perspectives, revealing a key theme: Cognitive Facilitation Through Prior Knowledge Connections. Students explained that storytelling helps them link new information to prior knowledge, making lessons easier to understand and remember. For example, one student (S3) shared that fables and moral lessons made learning more relatable and meaningful.

> Storytelling…connects new information with something I already know. With fables or stories with moral lessons, I can relate the values or messages in those stories to real-life situations or experiences I've had. I can remember the main points better. (S3)

> Consequently, students described how storytelling also could encourage critical thinking and deeper engagement. As S9 explained:

> During stories, I couldn't help but ask myself questions like, 'How did the character's choices align with what we're learning about resilience?' or 'What can I learn from this character that applies to my own life?' It feels like I'm actively participating in my own learning because I'm not just listening passively. (S9)

Top Three and Lowest-Rated Responses to Storytelling

Under the affective domain, as seen in Table 3 below, findings reveal that storytelling is seen as a significant generator of excitement and enjoyment in the classroom:

Table 3

Top Three and Lowest-Rated Affective Responses to Storytelling

Rank	Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	I feel excited when my teacher uses storytelling during lessons.	3.90	0.94	Generally Positive
2	I enjoy participating in storytelling activities in class.	3.84	0.94	Generally Positive

Rank	Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
3	Storytelling makes learning English more engaging for me.	3.83	0.91	Generally Positive
10	I feel less anxious about speaking in English when storytelling is used in class.	3.55	1.05	Generally Positive

Source. Own research.

However, the limitations of storytelling in reducing speaking anxiety were revealed upon closer scrutiny (M=3.55, SD=1.05). While storytelling established itself as an engaging tool, students expressed high levels of anxiety during oral tasks. It serves as a call for important pedagogical attention and for appropriate strategies to reduce anxiety within the mechanisms of the story itself.

Behavioural attitudes towards storytelling also received positive ratings (M=3.62, SD=0.96). It reflects strong in-class participation with lower enthusiasm around the use of storytelling in less formal settings (Table 4):

Table 4

Top Three and Lowest-Rated Behavioural Responses to Storytelling

Rank	Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	I listen carefully when others share their stories in English.	3.79	0.89	Generally Positive
2	Storytelling activities encourage me to speak more in English.	3.73	0.95	Generally Positive
3	I take part in group storytelling activities with enthusiasm.	3.71	0.88	Generally Positive
10	I would voluntarily participate in storytelling activities outside the classroom.	3.45	0.98	Generally Positive

Source. Own research.

Qualitative evidence indicates that students view the classroom as a protective space that builds confidence and encourages collective investment. Whereas decreased motivation outside this formalised environment suggests that academic approaches to storytelling have not meaningfully filtered into individual storytelling practice.

Lastly, as shown in Table 5, storytelling was perceived to help very well with vocabulary learning and retention, but somewhat less so in bridging theoretical concepts and real-world applications.

Table 5

Top Three and Lowest-Rated Cognitive Responses to Storytelling

Rank	Item	M	SD	Interpretation
1	Storytelling is an effective way to learn new vocabulary.	3.86	0.93	Generally Positive

Rank	Item	M	SD	Interpretation
2	I perceive storytelling as a useful method for developing my listening skills.	3.79	0.92	Generally Positive
3	Storytelling helps me remember key lesson points more easily.	3.79	0.91	Generally Positive
10	Storytelling helps me connect abstract language concepts to real-world experiences.	3.68	0.93	Generally Positive

Source. Own research.

Garnering favourable ratings, the lower score in connections from the abstract to the real world (M=3.68, SD=0.93) indicates an area to improve instruction. For example, students themselves suggested solid and material examples from real life and direct contextualisation from teachers.

In summary, this study identifies that storytelling is mostly viewed as an advantageous pedagogical tool but this should motivate further studies in the two areas that require improvement, namely, eliminating speaking anxiety and emphasising the applicability of language skills in the real world, in order to enhance language education.

RQ2: Significant Difference in the Extent of SATSPT when Grouped by School Affiliation and Current English Proficiency Level

Table 6

Extent of SATSPT when Grouped by School Affiliation

Source	df	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	4	1.10	0.357
Within Groups	275		

Note. Interpretation: No significant difference was found in SATSPT scores across different faculties ($p > 0.05$).
Source. Own research.

The results of the one-way ANOVA revealed no statistically significant difference in the extent of Storytelling Activities Toward Speaking Proficiency in English (SATSPT) when grouped according to faculty or school, $F(4, 275) = 1.10$, $p = 0.357$. This indicates that the variation in SATSPT scores among students from different faculties is not substantial enough to be considered meaningful. The findings imply that storytelling-based strategies in improving speaking proficiency are perceived similarly by students regardless of their academic discipline. This could be attributed to the universal applicability of storytelling as a pedagogical tool in language learning across various academic domains. Thus, the implementation of storytelling activities in English language instruction may not need to be discipline-specific, allowing

for a unified approach across faculties. This is corroborated by student statements from the interviews, leading to the theme "Useful for Everyone, No Matter the Major":

> No matter what we study, storytelling helps us in English class because it makes speaking practice easier. It gives us a way to organise our thoughts and use new words naturally. Even if I'm in a different faculty, I still need to improve my communication skills, and storytelling helps with that. (S5)

> Storytelling is useful because it makes learning English feel more natural. It's not just about memorising grammar — it helps us speak more confidently. Since we all need to communicate in English, storytelling works for any student, no matter what faculty we're from. (S7)

Table 7

Extent of SATSPT wshen Grouped by Current English Proficiency Level

Source	df	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	18	1.89	0.017
Within Groups	261		

Note. Interpretation: A significant difference was found in SATSPT scores across different levels of English proficiency ($p < 0.05$).
Source. Own research.

The one-way ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference in the extent of SATSPT when students were grouped according to their self-assessed English proficiency level, $F(18, 261) = 1.89$, $p = 0.017$. This suggests that students' experiences and perceived effectiveness of storytelling in enhancing their speaking skills vary based on their English proficiency. Learners at different CEFR levels may derive distinct benefits from storytelling activities. For instance, beginners might find storytelling useful for vocabulary acquisition and confidence-building, whereas advanced learners may appreciate its role in enhancing fluency, coherence, and critical thinking. The implication of this finding is that teachers should consider the English proficiency level of students when designing and implementing storytelling-based instruction. Tailoring activities to suit the linguistic capabilities of students could optimise their learning experience and outcomes.

To further explain the results of the quantitative finding, students from different proficiency levels — A1, B2, and C1 — were asked about their experiences with storytelling in relation to their speaking proficiency. The theme *Storytelling Meets Learners Where They Are* emerged as the variation in their responses highlights how storytelling activities benefit students differently depending on their English proficiency level. The statements provided by students from each level reinforce the idea that beginners, intermediates, and advanced learners derive distinct advantages from storytelling, as follows:

> As a beginner, I find storytelling really helpful because it helps me learn new words in context. When I hear words in the story, I can understand what they mean and how they are used.

This makes it easier for me to remember and use them in my own speech. For example, when we tell a story, I feel less scared to try new words because I've already heard them used in a sentence. (S6)

Storytelling helps me a lot because I'm at a stage where I want to speak more naturally. I've learned a lot of words, but using them in a sentence is harder for me. When we listen to stories and retell them, I get to practice putting words together in a way that sounds normal. It makes me feel more confident in my speaking and helps me make my sentences flow better. (S2)

At an advanced level, storytelling is great for improving my fluency and critical thinking. The stories give me a chance to think quickly and respond logically, which helps me speak more coherently. I can pay attention to how native speakers structure their ideas, and it pushes me to use more complex language when I tell my own version of the story. I feel storytelling enhances my speaking by helping me express more complex ideas clearly. (S3)

These responses illustrate how storytelling functions as an effective tool for enhancing speaking proficiency at different stages of language learning. A1 level student appreciates the vocabulary-building and confidence-boosting aspects of storytelling, while B2 and C1 levels focus on fluency, coherence, and critical thinking. This reinforces the idea that storytelling should be adapted to suit the learners' proficiency levels to maximise its benefits in language acquisition.

Discussion

RQ1: Extent of Students' Attitudes Towards Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool (SATSPT)

The results from this study show that Thai university students have positive attitudes towards storytelling as a pedagogical device across profiles of affective, behavioural and cognitive domains. The highest reported mean score (M = 3.76) occurred in the cognitive domain, consistent with previous studies that emphasise reading and story-telling as significant in facilitating retention of new vocabulary, improved listening and memory recall (Fan, 2022; Robin, 2016). In particular, students focused on storytelling as an effective way to stimulate cognitive links using relatable contexts, which aligns with the findings of Hala Almutawa and Mai Alfahid (2024) and Hsin-Yu Lee et al. (2024) claimed that the utilisation of higher-order cognitive processes facilitates more profound and effective mastering of the language.

At the level of affective attitudes, excitement and enjoyment were categorised as core emotions. They resonated with Bloom's taxonomy, which highlights the significance of emotional involvement in learning contexts (Krathwohl et al., 1964). This finding aligns with past claims by Printer (2023) and Johnmarshall Reeve (2024) that positive emotional experiences determine and increase motivation and interest for learning.

However, this relatively smaller mean associated with anxiety reduction indicates a potential limitation in storytelling's effectiveness for managing speaking anxiety level. This reflects Richards (2022) results, which concluded that affective barriers such as anxiety are unlikely to be taken down even through positive emotional engagement.

Behaviourally, there were positive but varied patterns of active student participation in classroom contexts. They are consistent with the principles of reciprocal determinism, wherein engagement is influenced by perceived enjoyment and cognitive benefits (Bandura, 1986). However, students were less interested in voluntarily sharing stories outside structured environments. It reflects Ellis and Tod's (2018) taxonomy that behavioural engagement may drop when the protective structure of the classroom disappears. This finding suggests that scaffolding made available in the teaching and learning environment not only inside the classroom but also beyond classroom walls need to be set up as previous research revealed (Azis & Husnawadi, 2020; Puntambekar, 2022).

The gap in transferring theoretical knowledge gained from narrative to real-life utility deserves further educational inquiry. Explicit instruction was recommended by students that connected narrative language to practical contexts. It further bolsters the argument made by Michelle M. Gemmink et al. (2021) on the need for pedagogical changes specific to their context. Bridging this gap could reinforce students' application of language skills in contexts outside of their instruction.

It adds to extant literature by confirming empirical fact that storytelling encompasses multidimensional advantages with cognition being paramount and affective or behavioural limitations. Subsequent teaching approaches should then expand storytelling's formality, reduce apprehension and promote increased voluntary practice in multiple environments.

RQ2: Significant Difference in the Extent of SATSPT when Grouped by School Affiliation and Current English Proficiency Level

The results revealed no significant difference in students' attitudes towards storytelling as a pedagogical tool across faculties ($F(4, 275)=1.10$, $p=0.357$). Thus, it indicates the universal applicability of storytelling regardless of academic discipline. This is consistent with the literature on Robin (2016) and Michelle Scalise Sugiyama (2021). They illustrate the adaptability of storytelling as a teaching strategy across different educational environments. This qualitative evidence additionally reinforces that storytelling is a universally advantageous tool for language acquisition because it supports vocabulary retention and communicative fluency regardless of major. Such results may indicate that curriculum developers can successfully apply storytelling-based in-

struction across disciplines without discipline-specific customisation. Thus, it fosters inclusivity and wider educational utility.

However, grouping by English proficiency level showed a significant difference on SATSPT ($F(18, 261)=1.89$, $p=0.017$). This gap highlights the importance of teachers adapting storytelling interventions to address diverse linguistic abilities. Such finding supports the claims made by Fan (2022). He highlights that pedagogical effectiveness depends significantly on how competent learners are. In particular, the findings serve to corroborate theoretical predictions made earlier (Almutawa & Alfahid, 2024; Ellis & Tod, 2018) that the cognitive demands and benefits deriving from the use of a particular instructional approach differ considerably depending on the nature and knowledge that forms learners' input or knowledge processing schemas. Tangible variation which the researchers highlighted in qualitative insights has different pedagogical implications. For elementary learners (A1) storytelling is presumed to scaffold lexical acquisition and learner confidence. However, for intermediate (B2+) and advanced learners (C1+), storytelling creates opportunities for fluency improvement and heuristics development, as well as critical thinking development.

Significantly, these findings undermine a simplistic viewpoint held in prior research (Robin, 2016) that storytelling is inherently evocative of diminished speaking anxiety among all learners. Students reported high cognitive and affective perceptions but verbalised continued speaking anxiety. It indicates that anxiety alleviation through storytelling is not straightforward and that intentional intervention strategies are necessary. This multi-faceted view calls for a re-evaluation of how storytelling is used in the EFL classroom and suggests that more explicit strategies for anxiety reduction and bridging between storytelling language and real-life application be included in storytelling pedagogy.

In general, the qualitative findings largely support the quantitative results, explaining the strong cognitive attitudes students hold toward storytelling, such as vocabulary retention and comprehension. Affective engagement was also confirmed, but the assumption that storytelling reduces speaking anxiety was rejected, as students reported ongoing anxiety despite positive emotions. Differences in attitudes by English proficiency were supported, with lower-level students valuing scaffolding and higher-level students focusing on fluency and critical thinking. The limited voluntary use of storytelling outside class aligns with the behavioural findings, indicating the need for stronger support to encourage practice beyond the classroom.

Finally, it indicates how storytelling has a broad applicability across academic content-area disciplines but that its strengths as a pedagogical approach differ significantly according to the language proficiency of learners. Therefore, a more tailored approach to storytelling in EFL settings is necessary. It requires tools to adapt the type of story covered to meet learners' individual concerns and linguistic challenges, to boost their motivation and diminish communicative fears and anxiety levels.

Conclusion

This study critically explored Thai university students' attitudes on the use of storytelling in English language education. The results indicated mostly positive attitudes, with the cognitive domain rated highest. It reinforces that storytelling is effective at promoting understanding, vocabulary acquisition and retention. This study supports that cognitive schemas are instrumental for effective learning and students specifically attributed these benefits to the ability of storytelling to wrap around new information and fit it in a larger cognitive schema. In the same way, even affective responses were positive in general, with excitement and enjoyment accounted for primary emotional experiences. However, upon critical examination, a significant limitation emerged. Although storytelling had high levels of affective positivity, it was less effective in reducing speaking anxiety. This finding contradicted earlier studies that argued narratives reduced language anxiety in a general way. Thus, it illustrates an area of nuanced pedagogical refinement. Lastly, in the behavioural domain, students actively engaged in classroom activities but lacked voluntary participation in informal learning beyond structured settings. As such, the behavioural benefits of storytelling need additional scaffolding for independent engagement beyond formal education.

Quantitative findings also revealed no significant differences in attitudes towards storytelling across range of disciplines. It suggests wide pedagogical applicability of storytelling, regardless of discipline. In contrast, substantial variation was observed according to levels of English proficiency. For the students at the beginner level, the value of storytelling was mainly restricted to the lexical increase in their vocabulary along with getting confident in speaking while higher level students focused more on the increase in fluency, coherence and developing critical thinking skills. This study highlights the importance of teaching strategies that are tailored to meet the needs of learners at various stages of their knowledge journey.

The pedagogical implications of this study are that storytelling should be an integral component of EFL curricula across the board based on the widely applicable and readily accepted nature of storytelling. Still, teachers need to be mindful of the differences in proficiency levels in tailoring storytelling activities for optimal linguistic and cognitive benefits. Finally, pedagogical approaches that directly target speaking anxiety as well as connect abstract storytelling content to concrete, real-world scenarios will increase storytelling's effectiveness overall.

This study had several limitations. Firstly, although the research design was a robust mixed-method, it was restricted to one university context that obviously limited generalisability. Moreover, response biases were anticipated due to the self-reported nature of the data, especially in regard to attitudes and anxiety levels. Longitudinal studies in a multi-institution context to examine both generalisability and whether the benefits of storytelling are sustainable over long periods of time should be a focus of future research. Moreover, experimental designs explicitly testing anxiety-

reduction strategies within storytelling pedagogies would provide essential insights on how the identified affective limitations can be addressed. Finally, with the increasing encroachment of digital literacy in educational settings, future research can compare digital and traditional storytelling methods to assess differential effects on cognitive load, anxiety and behavioural engagement of learners. Delving into these areas may lead to even finer tuning of storytelling methods, fostering processes that holistically serve the linguistic, cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions of language acquisition.

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